

Jaggi Vasudev

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev (born 3 September 1957) is an Indian spiritual leader, yogi, mystic and visionary whose work has touched the lives of millions worldwide. He founded the Isha Foundation, a not for profit organization which offers yoga programs around the world, including India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Lebanon, Singapore, Canada,^[1] Malaysia, Uganda, China, Nepal, and Australia. The foundation is also involved in various social and community development activities, which have earned the foundation a special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.^[2] On 13 April 2017, the Government of India conferred the Padma Vibhushan award for his contribution towards the larger well-being of humanity.^[3] His book 'Inner Engineering' was a New York Times best-seller.

1 Early life

Born in Mysore, Karnataka (South India) on Tuesday 3 September 1957^[4] to Susheela and Dr. Vasudev, Jagadish was the youngest of four children – two boys and two girls. His father was an ophthalmologist with the Indian Railways and as a result, the family moved frequently. At the age of 12, he came in contact with Malladihalli Sri Raghavendra Swamiji who taught him a set of simple yoga asanas, the practice of which he regularly maintained.^[5] He states that “without a single day’s break, this simple yoga that was taught to me kept happening and led to a much deeper experience later.”^{[4]:39}

After his schooling at Demonstration School, Mysore in 1973, he graduated from the University of Mysore with a Bachelor’s degree in English literature.^[6] During his college years, he developed an interest in travel and motorcycles. A frequent haunt of his and his friends was the Chamundi Hill near Mysore, where they often gathered and went for nocturnal drives. He also traveled to various places in the country on his motorcycle. This experience made him resolve “to earn some quick money,” and just ride off to travel the world. In order to make money, he started several successful businesses after graduation, including a poultry farm, a brickworks and a construction business.

2 Spiritual experience

At the age of 25 on 23 September 1982,^[7] he rode up Chamundi Hill and sat on a rock, where he had a spiritual experience. He describes his experience as follows: “Till that moment in my life I always thought this is me and that’s somebody else and something else. But for the first time I did not know which is me and which is not me. Suddenly, what was me was just all over the place. The very rock on which I was sitting, the air that I breathe, the very atmosphere around me, I had just exploded into everything. That sounds like utter insanity. This, I thought it lasted for ten to fifteen minutes but when I came back to my normal consciousness, it was about four-and-a-half-hours I was sitting there, fully conscious, eyes open, but time had just flipped.”^{[8]:04:04} Six weeks after this experience, he left his business to his friend and travelled extensively in an effort to gain insight into his mystical experience. After about a year of meditation and travel, he decided to teach yoga to share his inner experience.^[7]

In 1983, he conducted his first yoga class with seven participants in Mysore. Over time, he began conducting yoga classes across Karnataka and Hyderabad traveling from class to class on his motorcycle. He lived off the proceeds of his poultry farm rental and refused payment for the classes. A usual practice of his was to donate the collections received from participants to a local charity on the last day of the class.^[7] These initial programs were the basic format on which the Isha Yoga classes were later built.

3 Dhyanalinga

Main article: [Dhyanalinga](#)

In 1994, Sadhguru conducted the first program in the premises of the newly established Isha Yoga Center, during which he described the Dhyanalinga. The Dhyanalinga is a yogic temple and a space for meditation, the consecration of which, Sadhguru stated was his life’s mission entrusted to him by his guru.^[7] In 1996, the stone edifice of the linga was ordered and arrived at the ashram. After three years of work, the Dhyanalinga was completed on 23 June 1999^[9] and opened to the public on 23 November.^[10]

The Dhyanalinga offers a meditative space that does not ascribe to any particular faith or belief system.^[11] A 76-foot dome, constructed using bricks and stabilised mud



The Nandi bull statue at the Isha Yoga Center



Saplings being readied for transportation at a PGH nursery.



The Dhyanalinga is the first of its kind to be completed in over 2000 years.

mortar without steel or concrete,^[12] covers the sanctum sanctorum. The lingam is 13 feet and 9 inches in height and made of black granite. The Sarva Dharma Sthamba, located at the front entrance, functions as an icon of singularity, with the sculptural reliefs and symbols of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Shinto inscribed as a universal welcome.^[13]

4 Isha Foundation

Main article: [Isha Foundation](#)

Sadhguru established the Isha Foundation, a non religious, non-profit organisation entirely run by volunteers. Isha Yoga Center near Coimbatore was founded in 1993, and hosts a series of programs to heighten self-awareness through yoga. The foundation works in tandem with international bodies like the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.^[2]

4.1 Social initiatives

He is also the founder of Project GreenHands (PGH), a grassroots ecological initiative which was awarded the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar, by the Government

of India in June 2010.^[14] PGH aims to increase the green cover in Tamil Nadu by 10% and has successfully overseen the planting of more than 27 million trees by over 2 million volunteers.^[15] In an interview with National Geographic Green magazine, he explained the impetus which led him to establish Project GreenHands: “In the year 1998, certain experts [...] made a prediction, by 2025, 60% of Tamil Nadu will be a desert. [...] I decided to drive across Tamil Nadu and see for myself if this is true. [...] I realized they were completely wrong because it wouldn't go to 2025, it would happen much faster according to me. [...] So from '98 to 2003, 2004, I went about planting trees in people's minds. And since 2004, we [have been] transplanting those trees back to the ground.”^[16]

Action for Rural Rejuvenation (ARR) is an initiative of the Isha Foundation that aims to improve the overall health and quality of life of the rural poor. ARR was established in 2003 and seeks to benefit 70 million people in 54,000 villages across South India. As of 2010, ARR has reached over 4,200 villages and a population of over 7 million people.^{[17][18]} He has also been involved with agricultural and farmers' associations to work towards resolving issues faced by Indian farmers.^[19]

Isha Vidhya, is Isha Foundation's educational initiative, which aims to raise the level of education and improve literacy in rural India. There are seven schools in operation which educate around 7,000 students.^[20] The foundation has also “adopted” 512 government schools to reach out to students from financially constrained backgrounds, and aims to adopt up to 3,000 schools.^{[21][22]}

5 Yoga programs

After the establishment of the ashram, Sadhguru began conducting regular yoga programs at the Isha Yoga Center, including a course for the Indian Hockey team in 1996.^{[23][24]} In 1997, he began conducting classes in the United States^{[25][26]} and in 1998, he began conducting yoga classes for life-term prisoners in Tamil Nadu prisons.^[27] From 2011, he began conducting programs



Sadhguru conducting the Inner Engineering Program at the Bombay Stock Exchange, Mumbai.

with large-scale participation of up to 10,000 and 15,000 participants at once. These large-scale programs have been attended by over 75,000 people in total.^{[28][29]}

The programs are offered under the umbrella of Isha Yoga. The word Isha means “the formless divine”.^[30] Isha yoga’s flagship program is 'Inner Engineering', which introduces people to meditation and pranayam and the Shambhavi Mahamudra.^[31] He also conducts yoga classes for corporate leadership to introduce them to what he calls “inclusive economics”, which he says introduces a sense of compassion and inclusiveness into today’s economic scenario.^{[32][33]}

He also regularly conducts **Mahasathsangs** in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Here he gives talks, teaches meditation, and holds question and answer sessions with the audience. These Mahasathsangs are also used as platforms to encourage tree-planting activities as well.^[34] He also takes spiritual aspirants on annual yatras to **Mount Kailash** and the **Himalayas**. The Kailash Yatra led by him is among the largest groups to make the trip to Kailash, with 514 pilgrims attending the journey in 2010.^{[35][36]} He also spends time working with people on stress relief in institutes of tertiary education like SRM University, Chennai.

Sadhguru organises all-night **Mahashivarathri** celebrations every year at the Isha Yoga Center. It’s estimated that these celebrations were attended by as many as 800,000 people in 2013.^{[37][38][39]} The night includes music, dance, and guided meditation. In 2013, performers included Carnatic singer Aruna Sairam, dancer Anita Ratnam, and the band The Raghu Dixit Project.^[39]

In March 2005, construction of the Isha Institute of Inner-sciences (III) in McMinnville, Tennessee, USA was begun and was completed 6 months later. Sadhguru had decided to establish III as a Center for spiritual growth in the Western Hemisphere. On 7 November 2008, he consecrated the Mahima Hall, a 39,000 square foot, free-standing meditation hall at the III. Mahima Hall is the largest meditation hall in the Western Hemisphere.^[40] On 30 January 2010, he consecrated the Linga Bhairavi, a representation of the feminine aspects of the divine at the

Isha Yoga Center.^[41]

6 Participation in global and economic forums



KV Kamath, who was present at the Isha Insight program.

Sadhguru spoke at the United Nations Millennium World Peace Summit in 2000,^[41] the World Economic Forum in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.^[42] On 24 June 2013, he conducted a multi-religious session titled, “Interfaith Deliberations on the Universality of Religions” at the Isha Yoga Center, which was attended by representatives of various religions, and coincided with the fourteenth anniversary celebrations of the **Dhyanalinga**.^{[43][44]}

In 2012, he was voted among the hundred most powerful Indians for his contribution in the field of environmental protection and for encouraging public participation in ecological issues.^[45] He was also a participant in the 2006 documentary film **ONE: The Movie**. He has been involved in one-on-one interactions as part of the “In Conversations With the Mystic” program with Shekhar Kapur, Virender Sehwag, Juhi Chawla, Barkha Dutt, Anupam Kher, Jasti Chelameswar, Dilip Cheria, Muzaffar Ali, Tarun Tahiliani, Jaya Prakash Narayana and Kiran Bedi.^{[46][47][48]}

In 2012, he initiated the Isha Insight program, which focuses on helping small and medium businesses scale up their business activities. The program was conducted

by Ram Charan with KV Kamath, Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao, Shankar Annaswamy, Vellayan Subbiah and Pramod Chaudhari also active in the program.^[49] In an interview with *Forbes* magazine, speaking about the motivation behind setting up the program, he said, “While speaking at economic summits and to leaders in India and outside, I have noticed that the most serious issue people have is a lack of insight into what they are doing, or what they could do. That’s how we ended up creating this programme called Insight.”^[50]

7 Adiyogi



The 112-foot Adiyogi statue at Isha Yoga Center.

Sadhguru designed the 112-foot statue of Adiyogi, which is located at the Isha Yoga Center. The statue depicts the first yogi. It was inaugurated on Mahashivaratri, 24 February 2017, by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi.^[51] The Adiyogi statue depicts Shiva as the first yogi or Adiyogi, and first Guru or Adi Guru, who offered yoga to humanity. The statue is built by Isha Foundation and weighs around 500 tonnes (490 long tons; 550 short tons).

Sadhguru notes that the statue is for inspiring people to take up yoga. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has included the consecration of the statue in its official Incredible India campaign as a destination.^[52]

8 Publications

Sadhguru is the author of several books, including *Inner Engineering: A Yogi’s Guide to Joy*, which entered the Washington Post and The New York Times bestseller list in multiple categories. The book tour in North America included 17 cities, and the launch events were attended by an estimated 26,000 people.^{[53][54]} The Huffington Post review describes the books as “full of practical tools to begin one’s self-transformation journey.”^[55]



Narendra Modi releasing the book, Adiyogi: The Source of Yoga, by Sadhguru.

8.1 English

- *Adiyogi: The Source of Yoga*,^[56] ISBN 9352643925
- *Inner Engineering: A Yogi’s Guide to Joy*, ISBN 0-8129-9780-8, 9780812997804
- *Three Truths of Well Being*, ISBN 978-0-14-342138-2
- *Encounter the Enlightened*, ISBN 81-86685-60-X
- *Mystic’s Musings*, ISBN 81-86685-59-6
- *Joy 24x7*, ISBN 978-81-7992-914-8
- *Pebbles of Wisdom*, ISBN 978-81-7992-952-0
- *The Mystic Eye*, ISBN 81-7992-883-7
- *Essential Wisdom from a Spiritual Master*, ISBN 81-7992-882-9
- *Flowers on the Path*, ISBN 81-87910-05-4
- *Himalayan Lust*, ISBN 978-81-8495-076-2
- *Eternal Echoes: The Sacred Sounds Through the Mystic*, ISBN 81-87910-02-X
- *Dhyanalinga: The Silent Revolution*, ISBN 81-87910-00-3
- *Dhyanalinga: The Eternal Form*
- *Circus of The Mind*, ISBN 81-87910-10-0
- *Unleashing The Mind*, ISBN 81-87910-08-9
- *Good And Bad Divides The World*, ISBN 81-87910-07-0
- *Enlightenment: What It Is*, ISBN 81-87910-06-2
- *Sacred Space For Self-transformation*, ISBN 81-87910-09-7
- *Ancient Technology For The Modern Mind*, ISBN 81-87910-11-9

- *Three Truths of Well Being*, ISBN 978-0-670-08706-8
- *Midnights with the Mystic*, ISBN 978-1-57174-561-3
- *A Guru Always takes you for a Ride*, ISBN 978-81-87910-53-4
- *Ancient Technology For The Modern Mind*, ISBN 978-81-87910-11-4
- *Don't Polish Your Ignorance....it may shine*, ISBN 978-81-8495-200-1
- *Of Mystics & Mistakes*, ISBN 978-81-8495-308-4
- *Body - The Greatest Gadget/Mind Is Your Business*, ISBN 978-93-5083-360-5
- *Emotion The Juice Of Life : Compulsiveness To Consciousness*, ISBN 978-93-5083-362-9
- *Encounter the Enlightened*, ISBN 978-81-86685-60-0
- *Sadhguru Biography-More Than A Life*, ISBN 978-0-670-08512-5
- *Why Suffering*
- *Inner Management: In the Presence of the Master*
- *Isha Living*
- *Sexuality And Divine*
- *You*
- *SG Convex View book*
- *The sacred India Book*
- *Shiva Ultimate Outlaw*

8.2 Tamil

- ... *Seiyathe!* ISBN 978-81-8476-288-4
- *Athanaikum Asaipadu* ISBN 81-89780-05-0
- *Moondravathu Konam* ISBN 978-81-8476-155-9
- *Unakkve Oru Ragasiyam* ISBN 978-81-89936-24-2
- *Konjam Amudham Konjam Visham* ISBN 978-81-8476-134-4
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- *Anandha Alai*
- *Gnanathin Bramandam*
- *Guru Thantha Guru*

8.3 Hindi

- *Yogi: Sadhguru Ki Mahayatra* ISBN 978-8183227933
- *Ek Adhyatmik Guru Ka Alaukik Gyan* ISBN 978-81-8495-142-4
- *Mrityu Ek Kalpana Hai* ISBN 978-81-288-2969-7
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8.5 Telugu

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- *Ashinchu sadhinchu*
- *Anandam 24X7*

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10 External links

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